Chapter 121 Reika

After Reika asked, “What happens now?” I thought about how I could use her.  As an incubus—what benefit could she supply to me?  Her father had traded her for favors, and it put distaste in my mouth.

I cleaned my hands meticulously and asked, “How much longer until you finish your master’s degree?” My thought drifted to my suit while waiting for her to answer.  I had gotten one small oil stain on a sleeve. I was definitely not wearing an Armani suit to a pizza place again, even if it was Vincent’s.

Reika answered carefully, “I can complete the degree by the end of the summer.  Are you going to utilize me in the field of material science?”

I laughed softly, trying to set her at ease, “Use you?  You make it sound like I own you.”  Reika’s impassive face made me think she thought of herself as a possession.  She probably had been reliant on her father for so long.  Also, I was learning beastkin viewed family very differently.  You worked for the family in whatever capacity was needed.  Reika’s position as an illegitimate child gave her minimal status in the larger family.  I slid out of the booth and motioned her to follow.  We got into Bentley, and I told Artica to bring us to the cabin.  Artica seemed to have a questioning look about taking Reika to the house but remained quiet and drove.

I sat next to Reika in the back seat.  “Tell me about your mother and your sister at Princeton,” I asked.  Her eyes went wide in shock at my knowledge of her sibling.  I had thrown her off balance and was hoping to make her feel comfortable but may have done the opposite.

“My mother lives in Norway.  She is my father’s vice; he sees her a few times a year.  My sister doesn’t know who our father is, even though her college scholarship came through one of his companies.  I asked him not to involve her in his business, and he has not contacted her, to my knowledge.  She wants to be a lawyer to advocate for children in abusive homes. Not because she was abused but because her best friend growing up was a victim and committed suicide.”  Reika told me more information than I thought she would.

“Interesting.  So you studied finances as an undergraduate?  Are you versed in investment strategy?”  I asked with interest.

She straightened slightly, “I studied to take over a branch of my father’s investment portfolio.  When I learned he would be handing over all the duties to his legitimate children, I decided to pursue a masters in material science.  Then he called me recently and asked me if I wanted to run all his transit operations. All I needed to do was convince you to open additional portals for him.”

“What do you want to do?”  I asked the young woman, who was slowly relaxing with my questions.

Reika gave it serious thought. “I want to run the companies responsible for the next revolution of scientific advancement,” she voiced passionately.

“Are not all the advancements available on the higher levels or elsewhere in the galaxy?  You just have to go and bring them to Earth.”  I asked, curious.  I was mainly ignorant of why Earth did not have better technology and space travel as well.

Reika went full nerd lecturer on me, “For one, FTL travel requires aether. No science can propel organic matter faster than light. All interstellar travel is usually done through portal magic on this layer.  Our layer is starved of aether, so opening portals is quite costly.  Earth relies more on technology than most worlds.  We have been lucky as well that industry has thrived on Earth.  Generally, planets have too much conflict, and the populations are held in check to develop large-scale industries. At least the ones I have been able to study in books.”

I digested what she said momentarily, then replied, “Then have you studied the higher layers and technology?”

“Yes, sort of. My focus in college was the trade goods of various cities on the lower layers. My access to knowledge was limited, but I came up with a number of models on how trading worked through the transits and layers,” she said proudly.

“And your father did not think you valuable?” I asked, stroking her ego a little.

“Most of my models are reflective of higher layer economic structures and free inter-planetary trade facilitated via transits. Earth is fairly restrictive. It has to do with the angelic-demonic wars, but I am not sure why magic continues to be concealed by the Magus Arcanum, but I have theories,” she said in a sort of sexy teacher way. Well, sexy because the thin fabric of her shirt showed her nipples hardening. Talking about this topic got her excited—sexually excited.

We pulled into the cabin house. It was not as fancy as the place I had dropped her off, but it was secluded. “You can tell me your theories inside about Earth’s magic.” I walked inside, and she followed me with Artica.

We went into the living room with the large glass windows and cathedral ceiling. Bedelia, Iris, and Abigail joined us. Everyone else was out shopping. They seemed curious about Reika as we sat. I introduced her, “This is Reika. She is going to be my new financial advisor but will be heading back to California to finish her masters degree in material science tomorrow.”

“Financial advisor?” she questioned, confused.

“Yes. I am going to give you the twenty-five million your father is sending me. I will give you another fifty million if you do well,” I said nonchalantly. Not just Reika was stunned, but so was everyone else. I figured keeping half of the 100 million from the sale of the estate as liquid funds was enough to build the storage unit. If Reika could establish a small financial empire, then I would have something to leave my sister and parents when I moved to a higher layer—if they could not come with me. “You were saying you had theories about the angelic-demonic wars on Earth?”

It took her a moment to process the question before continuing, “Yes. Everyone knows the angelics won, and they are deeply embedded in mythos as being righteous and good. But I think they are cultivating the population of Earth for their own ends.” I motioned for her to continue.

“Well, most planets I studied are in constant conflict. Either by outside forces or internal strife. Earth has been, for the most part, isolated and stable. It has allowed technology to flourish at an ever-increasing pace. With the general populace ignorant of magic, it is the venue where they can focus their efforts.” She took a deep breath, “You are going to think I am crazy, but I think the angelics are preparing Earth to be cut off from the Source.”

Bedelia scoffed, “There is no way they could sever the transit, it would take thousands of years, and someone would notice.”

Reika shot back, “They did it to Mars,” she noted, defending her theory. The retort had Bedelia thinking.

Iris commented quietly, “If you were going to destroy a transit, you would probably want the foremost experts on transits out of the way.” Rekia looked confused at the comment.

“I do not think they are close to attempting it. They need the technology to reach a tipping point where it can match aetheric magic. Then they would need to store massive amounts of aether to keep life flourishing after the transit is cut off, but I am terrible at aetheric theory,” she blushed. She took a breath and continued, “But with the recent speed and advances in technology, I suspect they are accelerating their plans for some reason.”

Bedelia looked at me, “She seems like a conspiracy nut, Caleb. I say throw her back.”

“I can show you my research,” Reika rebuked her and sounded passionate. “It is the only reason that makes sense when you look at it from all angles of all the effort to suppress the knowledge of aetheric magic.”

“When do you think a tipping point would be reached?” I asked seriously and got an exasperated look from Bedelia. Artica was completely lost in the conversation and sipped on her drink.

“Not for a hundred years. I would need to explore the technology of the higher layers, though. Everything I have read is quite old and probably not as relevant,” she said earnestly.

“So, are you some type of transit scholar?” I asked, giving Iris a look.

“More of a hobbyist. I mostly studied trade patterns and the reasons why profit margins exist between the layers and cities,” she said.

Iris asked insistently and with a note of anxiety, “Do you know William and Eloise Cartwright?”

“Yes! They are brilliant researchers, but I heard they went missing,” she immediately replied.

“I am their daughter,” Iris said flatly. Reika’s eyes bulged out in realization. I wondered if the fates had brought Reika to my service or if Dakkon had done a lot of research and prepared his daughter to work herself close to me. Her answers had remained honest from my truth sense ability. She seemed like a genuine nerd as well.

Reika was speechless, so I asked Iris, “Do you want to show her your parent’s research?”

“I have not really studied the transits—more the cities and trade goods,” Reika admitted. “My grasp of aetheric theory and the flow from the Source that maintains the transits is limited.”

“If you are going to work for me, you will learn then. Maybe we will delay your trip back to Cal Tech for a few days. Bedelia can get you a company credit card and set you up to work with the funds your father is sending me. Go with Iris to her house. They have a spare room there.” I really should have asked Iris’ permission, but she did not object.

After they left, Bedelia said, “Do you think they are getting close to cutting off Mercanious from the Source, and the orc invasions are a cover for moving the gear they need to do the same thing here?”

It was like lightning struck my thoughts at the suggestion, and I should have pieced it together myself. “Didn’t you think the idea was preposterous?”

“She made some valid points. I still think it would take hundreds if not thousands of years to accomplish,” she argued. “I do not know how they could also hide it from everyone.”

Artica interceded in the serious conversation, “Bedelia, you missed your core session on Friday. Maybe a distraction will help clear your mind.”

Bedelia looked at me and slowly formed a grin, “Are you coming, Artica?”

She jumped up, “Yep, and I hope more than once.”

Three hours later, I lay between Artica and Bedelia’s naked bodies on my bed. The sheets were going to need to be changed again. They were both exhausted and sleeping. My mind wandered to what I knew.

Something was happening on Mercanius. Andromeda was investigating, so I hoped to know more soon. Iris’ parents were supposedly kidnapped to stop the transit from being cut—but what if they were kidnapped to speed up the process? And was Bedelia’s guess correct about the orc invasion? Were they moving their operations to Earth? If it was the Magus Arcanum facilitating it, what would they hope to gain?

We were a bunch of kids playing in the grown-ups’ sandbox. The only grown-up I remotely trusted was Rincewind, and he was not even on the planet. After the aboleth, I would have a sit-down and talk with him. Maybe he could shed light on everything.

That night my nightmares were me as a marionette. I had a bunch of thick cables attached to me that were transit threads. They controlled my movements—directing me to do things I did not want to do. Then all of a sudden massive shears came into my dream and cut the threads manipulating me one by one until I just lay there, unable to move.

I woke and noticed I had only slept two hours. I left to get some flying in before I went to hockey practice. As I tested my maneuverability among the trees, I realized we were guessing too much. We needed concrete answers to start and solve the puzzle. The problem I kept coming back to was I was too weak to seek the answers. I needed strength or someone with strength at my back.

Carrie had also warned me I would have to go to Andromeda in the future. That really stuck because I was not sure if I should go alone. I did not want to risk anyone close to me unnecessarily. I landed, dressed, and returned to my car, happy with my flying skill improvements.

At hockey practice, the mood was mixed. We had the championship game coming on Saturday night. It was also our last week of practice. They were crediting the new coach in the media for coming in and patching the team together to lead us to the championship. I thought he did well, but my play carried us. I was always matched against the other team’s best, and I was either the goal scorer or had an assist on almost every goal we had.

But when the media came to interview James and me after practice, I put the coach in the spotlight and referred to James as the heart of the team. Hazel got bold during our tutoring session and rubbed the outline of my penis. I did respond, sporting a strong erection, to it because I did not want any rumors going around I was gay. I also admit it was fun frustrating her while I tutored her. We were in a private study room, so no one was privy to her wandering hands.

The exam I was preparing for on Friday was Latin. At lunch, I found Artica had skipped out from school. She couldn’t wait to get her hands on the Escalade. Iris told me Artica was also driving Reika to the airport in the evening in the new Escalade. Reika was at Iris’ house picking out a few books she would study in California.

Dakkon’s jet that she arrived in had already returned. It was a signal that I was now responsible for Reika’s expenses. I didn’t mind. The nerdy wolfkin would become an asset, and Iris said she was highly motivated to show her father what he had passed on. The echo of Andromeda was in my ears, though—everyone will eventually betray you.

I learned from Jade that Anya was skipping the World Championships in favor of starting her acting career. I was surprised but understood. Anya might be shy and reserved, but she secretly craved the spotlight. She would be moving to Canada to start filming the TV teen drama in the summer. Jade griped that she now had to pay for acting lessons. Jade’s finances were thin as the new mansion was under construction. She did not want to borrow any funding from me.

After school, I found myself parked with Iris at High Point Park in a semi-date. We were actually watching the phone for the final closing of the estate auction while eating Sonic burgers and fries. It was kind of exciting as the highest bid at five pm our time would win. The selling price was sneaking up in steady increments. The final sale price of $162,500,000.00. After taxes and commission, I would be transferred $119 million, give or take a million.

We returned to the cabin, invited everyone over, bought some fragrant cheese, and opened some ridiculously expensive wine. Iris and Bedelia had the constitution of a babe. They were hilarious drunks as well. It was a highly entertaining evening, but I had to go home eventually as my parents had not seen me in days.

After conversing with the parents, I was in bed and realized I was filthy rich. The sale would take a few days to process, but the buyer was paying cash to expedite the transaction. The twenty-five million from Dakkon had already hit the accounts, and Bedelia was setting up the funds under the Silverhorn Consulting umbrella for Reika to us. All this did not even include the auction of all the items I had not taken would start on March 15th—the same day we would attack the aboleth.

My dreams were much more pleasant this evening.

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Agatha steamed as she repeatedly tried to reach William Masterson. She was considering flying back to America to confront the bastard. He was divesting from their shared portfolio, and her stocks were feeling the sell-off. What the hell was he doing?

Her computer screen showed her investments slowly dropping from forty-five million to thirty-seven over the next two hours. She could do nothing unless she joined in on the sell-off. Finally closing bell ended the bloodbath she had just taken, and her phone rang. It was that asshole.

She picked it up, “You fucking bastard! What are you doing?! We had an agreement.” She raged for minutes before calming down.

The man on the other end of the line was not William. “Miss Corleonis. This is Dexter. I regret to inform you that Mr. Masterson has decided to cut all ties with you. He apologizes for any inconvenience this may have caused you and assures you that your assets will recover to their full value over the next six months. He requests that you do not contact him or members of his family. Once again, he apologizes for the abrupt nature of the separation, but a clean break is always best.”

The line disconnected, and Agatha threw her phone into the marble fireplace to make sure it shattered. She knew why this had happened. A week ago, she approached him about Caleb Silversmith, also known as Appolyon Silverhorn. They were going to work together to ferret out uses for his skill to raise aether cores. Now that asshole wanted the prize all to himself. Well, she would not stand for it. She identified and uncovered the jewel. It was her prize to take. If she couldn’t do it subtly, there were other ways.

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